



Read the full Brussels Labour submission to the policy consultation paper at brusselslabour.eu/?p=701

Read the Refounding Labour summary report at tinyurl.com/RefLabsummary

See the rule changes from the Refounding Labour review at tinyurl.com/RefLabrulebook

'Labour is listening': refounding Labour to win

'Labour is listening' was the theme on 29 June when Brussels Labour welcomed National Executive Committee member Ellie Reeves to the branch to talk about the 'Refounding Labour' and 'Partnership into Power' consultations currently being undertaken by the Labour Party.

Ellie has been a member of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) for six years. The NEC is the ruling body of the Labour Party, and is in charge of its overall direction and policy and decision-making processes. It has 33 members, including MPs, MEPs and Councillors, as well as representatives of CLPs, trade unions, Young Labour and Socialist societies.

Ellie began her talk by explaining the process that led to the launch of the 'Refounding Labour' and 'Partnership into Power' consultation exercises.

Following the 2010 election and the end of 13 years in government, there was a growing belief that the Party's structures and decision-making processes had become outdated and were not fit for the 21st century.

In particular, it was felt that in order to win back widespread support in the country, the Party needed to make reforms to become more outward-facing and engaged in local communities.

With this in mind, Ed Miliband appointed MPs Peter Hain and Pat McFadden to take the lead in the two consultations - Peter Hain for 'Refounding Labour' and Pat McFadden for 'Partnership into Power'.

Ellie highlighted some of the key issues under consideration, including the introduction of a Labour supporters scheme, the training of community organisers, and ways of developing more vibrant CLPs.

She warmly welcomed the submission of Brussels Labour to the consultations and the contribution that the branch could make to Party reform.

In particular, she undertook to look further into the proposal for CLP status for Labour International and the possibility of twinning Brussels Labour with a South East constituency. Ellie also explicitly recognised the expertise and experience that Brussels

Labour could bring in the development of links with sister parties.

Brussels Labour would like to thank Ellie for taking the time to visit during a very busy consultation period and for answering a wide range of questions on subjects including voting rights, political donations, subscriptions, training of branch officials, and the welcoming of new members.

The consultation process ran until the end of June, with the NEC considering the responses over the summer. Well over 3,000 individual responses were received and a summary report was published in July.

The proposals for reform went to the Party Conference in September with a number of changes being made to the party's rulebook.

The abolition of elections to the Shadow Cabinet made the headlines, but Brussels Labour members may also be interested to hear that one representative from Labour International will be added to the membership of the National Policy Forum.

Isobel Findlay

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Branch meeting **Emma Reynolds MP, Shadow Foreign Office minister**

The road from Brussels Labour to the Opposition front bench



Brussels Labour Chair Keir Fitch with Emma Reynolds MP

Emma Reynolds MP returned to Brussels Labour on 20 September to talk about life as a newly-elected Member of Parliament and her thoughts on developments in foreign policy and the way ahead for Labour.

Emma was elected MP for Wolverhampton North East in May 2010 and is a former Treasurer of Brussels Labour.

She emphasised that despite a disappointing election result, morale was high within the Parliamentary Labour Party and especially among the new intake.

Although she felt that the Party had taken too long to elect its new leader, Ed Miliband was now gaining momentum after taking the political lead during the phone-hacking scandal.

After Ed Miliband's election as leader, Emma was appointed to the Shadow Foreign office team and has been working with Shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander in scrutinising the government's policy towards the European Union.

In an interesting analysis of the coalition government's policy, she was keen to highlight the obvious inconsistencies.

This was apparent in the recently-adopted 'referendum lock' legislation - in her view, a politically-motivated Bill designed to appease Tory backbenchers but lacking in practice a consistent approach to Britain's relationship with the EU. For example, a referendum would be needed on the question of a European Public Prosecutor but not on the accession of Turkey to the EU.

Emma then took the time to answer many and varied questions from Brussels Labour members on subjects including the eurozone, government policy on human rights, a financial transaction tax and the 2014 European elections.

Brussels Labour thanks Emma for coming to speak at the branch meeting and wishes her well with her new responsibilities on the Shadow front bench.

Isobel Findlay

The new shadow cabinet

On 6-7 October, Ed Miliband reshuffled the shadow front bench team. Emma Reynolds MP was appointed as Shadow Minister for Europe. The new shadow cabinet comprises:

Leader of the Opposition: **Ed Miliband**
Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, Party Chair, Culture, Media and Sport: **Harriet Harman**
Shadow Chancellor: **Ed Balls**
Shadow Foreign Secretary: **Douglas Alexander**
Shadow Home Secretary, Women and Equalities: **Yvette Cooper**
Shadow Lord Chancellor, Justice: **Sadiq Khan**
Shadow Chief Whip: **Rosie Winterton**
Health: **Andy Burnham**
Education: **Stephen Twigg**
Business, Innovation, Skills: **Chuka Umunna**
Defence: **Jim Murphy**
Communities / Local Govt: **Hilary Benn**
Shadow Leader of the House: **Angela Eagle**
Energy and Climate Change: **Caroline Flint**
Shadow Chief Secretary: **Rachel Reeves**
London and the Olympics: **Tessa Jowell**
Transport: **Maria Eagle**
Work and Pensions and Policy Review Co-ordinator: **Liam Byrne**
International Development: **Ivan Lewis**
Environment, Food, Rural Affairs: **Mary Creagh**
Cabinet Office: **Jon Trickett**
Labour Party Deputy Chair and Campaign Coordinator: **Tom Watson**
Northern Ireland: **Vernon Coaker**
Scotland: **Margaret Curran**
Wales and Chair of the National Policy Forum: **Peter Hain**
Shadow Leader of the House of Lords: **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**
Lords Chief Whip: **Lord Bassam of Brighton**

Also attending: **Liz Kendall** (Care and Older People); **Michael Dugher** (Cabinet Office); **Emily Thornberry** (Shadow Attorney General); **Lord Stewart Wood** (Cabinet Office)

An international perspective on the Labour Party Conference

From my first conference in 1985, to this year's event in Liverpool, party conferences have changed radically. While Conference is still interesting, it is really not a resolution-passing, debating and decision-making body any more.

A number of commentators in the press asked the question 'what are the party conferences for?' and questioned whether their time has been and gone.

David Cameron's speech at the Conservative Conference did not fill all the seats this year; however, there was a healthy attendance for Ed Miliband's speech.

Conference is an amalgam of bureaucratic AGM business, discussion, and presentation of the Labour Party, its people, and its view of the world, to a wider audience. The agenda swung between these three strands.

Debate was constructed around the 'Refounding Labour' and National Policy Forum documents. 'Refounding Labour' in particular included some interesting proposals, allowing more flexibility for the structure of meetings.

Perhaps Skype meetings, Facebook discussions and 'tweet-ups' will become the norm for meetings, rather than the usual business meetings of old that usually sent everyone to sleep.

However, there was criticism that insufficient time had been made available since the publication of the final document to discuss it further. A number of delegates took to floor noting the irony of curtailing discussions on a document designed to improve engagement with members.

On the Sunday of Conference I met the Labour International Coordinating Committee. The LI executive has worked hard with Ellie Reeves - our liaison on the NEC - to rationalise the position of the Labour International within the Party.

Ellie was able to attend part of the meeting and brought good news: proposals would go before Conference for LI to become a formally constituted CLP, and to have a representative on the National Policy Forum (plans which were subsequently passed).

With regard to the headline speeches, three shadow ministers in particular had a good conference: Yvette Cooper, Jim Murphy and Andy Burnham.

I thought that Jim Murphy (Defence) gave one

of the best speeches of the conference, and announced at the same time a populist proposal to give former service personnel membership for £1.

The two big speeches were those made by Ed Balls on Monday and Ed Miliband on Tuesday. Both speeches were muted and - certainly in Ed Miliband's case - too long. The media coverage was interesting, with some concentrating on facial features, while others - including an article in the Daily Telegraph - praised the leader's speech for setting out a new politics for the post-banking collapse, financial crisis age.

Our new leader has set out his stall and now has his own team. He now needs to deliver a coherent alternative that people will vote for in 2015 (or before then if the coalition collapses).

Glenis Wilmott MEP spoke on Monday morning and gave the European Parliamentary Labour Party report.

She remarked that the Left in Europe has been in retreat for the last few years - recalling that twelve years ago, Socialist or Social Democratic parties were in power (or in a coalition) in 12 of the 15 EU countries. Now the Left is in power in just eight out of 27 countries and the Left in the European Parliament is at its weakest ever.

She went on to say that *"We must produce a new vision for social democrats, international in scale, since globally produced problems can actually, only be solved, globally."*

I feel slightly more optimistic, since the darkest hour is often before the dawn. In the Senate elections that took place in France on the Sunday of our conference, the Parti Socialiste won control for the first time since 1953, and in Germany Angela Merkel has lost elections in her heartlands.

My fringe activities included introducing the EPLP fringe meeting. Brussels Labour was a key player in organising the event, entitled 'After the Arab Spring: How should Europe respond?'

The event was chaired by Neil Kinnock and included Claude Moraes MEP, Douglas Alexander MP and a female councillor from Morocco.

The event was packed, with about 150 people attending. The usual points were made about the response from Europe being too little, too



(top to bottom) Richard Howitt MEP, Neil Kinnock and Douglas Alexander MP at the EPLP breakfast; Ed Miliband addressing the Labour International reception; LI delegate Dalvir Singh speaking to Emma Reynolds MP

late, or not at all (in the case of Syria).

The best point came from Claude, who said that the Arab spring should be 'supported but not controlled' by Europe - the latter having happened many times in the past.

After each conference session, policy seminars allowed delegates to provide input to the policy reviews that are underway. I attended one under the 'Creating Strong and Sustainable

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Annual conference 2011

3 > Communities' heading, dealing with transport and housing.

Maria Eagle MP and Caroline Flint MP were both available to take questions, and the seminar was excellently chaired by Michael Cashman MEP.

Some very good points were made by some of the 50 or so delegates, especially concerning the mortgage drought and the lack of affordable housing.

Maria made a very interesting statement about re-regulation of the bus network outside London. She said that she had taken this on board and it was now a question of how, not whether, the next Labour government would re-regulate.

She also said she would welcome input from members about good practice in transport and I think this is where LI can play a role, sharing experiences from around the world.

The best part of the Conference, in my view, happened after the policy seminar on Wednesday, when Ed held a Q&A session with delegates and members of the public.

This is the start of a process of opening up and possibly including non-members in leadership elections. I understand that Labour Party observers - including the newly-appointed Shadow Europe Minister, Emma Reynolds, were in France looking at the primary elections for the Parti Socialiste presidential candidate.

The venue was packed and the demand to ask questions was far greater than the time allocated could accommodate. There really was energy in the hall. Ed was at ease and performed very well.

Some people suggested that perhaps we should scrap the conference and just have this sort of interaction - which really would be a radical change.

Valerie Stevens
Labour International, France

Labour International

Brussels Labour is now the largest branch of Labour International (LI).

LI is the international section of the Labour Party, representing Party members and supporters living outside the UK, either permanently or temporarily.

Many of you may already be members of LI but if you are not and would like to join, all details are on their website: labourinternational.net/join-or-support-2/.



Get in touch

To contact Brussels Labour officers, please refer to the contact details on page 5.

For membership queries, please email membership@brusselslabour.eu

Germinal welcomes your feedback, comments, suggestions and articles. To get in touch, please email germinal@brusselslabour.eu

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Forthcoming events

2011

13
OCT

John Fitzmaurice lecture 2011
Baroness (Jan) Royall,
Shadow Leader of the Lords
*Press Club Europe, 95 rue
Froissart, 1040 Brussels*
Venue open 19:00; 19:30 start

2011

18
OCT

Branch meeting
Harriet Harman MP, Deputy
leader of the Labour Party
Venue tbc - 18:30-19:30

2011

23
NOV

Branch meeting
Clive Betts MP, Communities &
Local Govt Select Cttee Chair
Venue tbc - From 20:00

2011

5
DEC

Claude Moraes MEP and
Hackney North & Stoke
Newington CLP invite BL
members to meet CLP
members during their visit to
Brussels
The Staff - From 19:00

2011

7
DEC

Christmas Pub Quiz
Venue tbc

BL membership: FAQ

I'm a member of the Labour Party. Am I also a member of Brussels Labour (BL)?

No. BL membership is separate from Labour Party membership.

So do I have to pay extra?

Yes - **€25 (waged)** or **€5 (stagiaire/unwaged)** per year. These fees, unchanged for more than a decade, help us to meet the costs of running the branch (such as room hire for meetings, social events, mailings, website).

How do I join or check my status?

For Labour Party membership enquiries, contact the party directly (see labour.org.uk/contact). We also have membership forms.

To join BL, contact the Secretary or use the form online (at brusselslabour.eu/membership) and make a bank transfer or set up a direct debit to make your payment easier. Our bank details are:

IBAN: BE64 0011 1287 6552 **BIC:** GEBABEBB

If you have recently changed your contact details, please let us know:
secretary@brusselslabour.eu